



THE FIRST CLOVER FIELDS MANSION

Built 1760



## SOUTH-WEST MOUNTAINS

Margaret Douglas, Francis Nelson, and George Geiger.

After the death of Mrs. Margaret Douglas Nelson the Clover Fields estate went to her grandson, Frank M. Randolph, and his children, who now reside there, the ninth generation in descent from the first Nicholas Meriwether.

The second daughter of "Captain Billy" and Elizabeth Lewis—Mary Walker, who was called "Polly"—married her cousin, Peter M. Meriwether, and lived at Cismont, as we have already shown

We have now traced the family possession to, and will speak more fully of, the history past and present of this celebrated old homestead.

We give a picture of the old mansion which sheltered so many generations of the sons and daughters of this truly great and extended family. It is vividly impressed on the memory of the writer as it looked in 1845, presenting the same peculiar types of architecture so often found belonging to the period 1700, with its long, low porch in front, from the eaves of which rose a high, peaked roof, set off with small dormer-windows for its many narrow rooms above. Immense tall chimneys towered above the tree-tops, around whose wide hearths had gathered many generations at happy reunions. The many out-buildings surrounding the mansion—kitchen, meat-house, dairy, stables, barns, mills, and numerous negro cabins—gave it the appearance of quite a village, which would be still further heightened by droves of horses, vehicles, and troops of negroes passing to

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and fro. Here in the long porch "Colonel Nick" would sit and entertain his numerous friends with his experience in the "Braddock war," and how he, with three others, bore the wounded and defeated general from the battle-field ; and then would point with pride to the gold-laced embroidered coat sent him from Ireland by Braddock's sister, which for a long time hung in the Clover Fields parlor as a war relic ; and then "Aunt Peggy" would tell of her Scotch kindred, her home in the Old World, her youthful recollections of the voyage to America, and the exciting times of the Revolution. She would always have gathered around her troops of old and young to listen eagerly to these truthful stories. After this noble, kind-hearted couple passed away, being the last connecting link between the "Colonial" and the "new nation," their places were taken by "Captain Billy" and "Aunt Betsy." He would sit in the same seat and tell of the war of 1812, while she with delight related anecdotes of her "Lewis" and "Walker" kin, whose prowess during that exciting war period has become a part of history. It is said that Clover Fields could show more old china, old furniture, old books, and other Colonial relics than any other place along the mountains ; many of these had been brought direct from England and Scotland by the Rev. William Douglas, the grandfather of "Captain Billy," whose large and valuable library was once at Clover Fields, but which has since been scattered among his numerous descendants. "Aunt Betsy"

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would always with pride bring forth these family heirlooms and give their history, which would now be of priceless value to the antiquarian.

“Colonel Nick” Meriwether was quite active and prominent in the church, being mentioned by Bishop Meade as a vestryman in 1762, in connection with Thomas Jefferson, Dr. George Gilmer, and others in the establishment of old Walker’s Church. His son, William D. Meriwether, was also added to the vestry in 1787. It was at this time that he and Mr. Jefferson were ordered by the vestry “to lay off two acres of land, including a space around Walker’s Church,” land which had been given to the parish by John Walker, of Belvoir. This makes us suppose that Captain William Meriwether was, like Jefferson, a skilled surveyor. This fact is also made more probable by an old copy of Gibson’s “Surveying” of 1803, now in the hands of the writer, in which are the names of “Nicholas L. Meriwether, William and Mary College, 1809,” and “Charles J. Meriwether, 1816,” both of whom were sons of Captain William D. Meriwether, who used it. Thus it is presumed they all inherited a love for this science. Nicholas L., it is believed, died early. Charles J. Meriwether, his younger brother, outlived them all, and is still fresh in the remembrance of many now living. He bore strikingly the Meriwether characteristics of a generous, kind-hearted temperament, but with always decided opinions of his own upon every topic. He it was who came out upon the portico at Clover Fields, one day, during the civil

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war, as the "Yankees" rode up, and greeted them in his usual urbane and genial manner, thinking they were Confederate officers; nor did he find out his mistake until they had relieved him of his handsome gold watch and threatened to make him a prisoner.

The old book of surveying mentioned had also the name of Thomas Lewis Meriwether, who was one of the sons of Thomas Meriwether and Anne Minor, of Louisa County, and who died in 1838, unmarried. The old book, from its well worn appearance, must have been often handled by Jefferson, Meriwether Lewis, and other noted surveyors of the time who visited "Captain Billy."

Clover Fields, even at a very early period, became the rendezvous for the clergy, laity, professional, and political men of the day, besides a vast kindred from all sections. No one bearing the name of Meriwether, Walker, or Lewis, or being of the most remote kin, could pass Clover Fields without a visit to "Captain Billy" and "Aunt Betsy," and partake of their bounteous hospitality; even the stranger and wayfaring pilgrim were welcomed, so that the old house was always filled with guests, who would often spend weeks at a time with them.

After the death of William Douglas Meriwether and his wife, in 1845, the Clover Fields estate descended to his second daughter, Margaret Douglas Meriwether, who, with her second husband, Francis K. Nelson, lived and died there. It was about

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the year 1846 that the old Colonial house was removed to give place to the present modern structure, which was erected by Mr. Nelson, whose taste and culture were far in advance of his day.

This spacious mansion, at the time of its completion, exceeded any in the neighborhood for beauty and utility. Here, in more modern style, the hospitalities continued to be dispensed with a liberal hand, and "Cousin Peggy," like her great-grandmother, bestowed blessings upon all around her, such as never will be forgotten by those who were the fortunate recipients. Mr. Nelson was a most striking man, and one long to be remembered; with a *suaviter in modo et fortiter in re*, combined with an exactness and neatness which were always shown, not only in person, but enforced in the more minute details of the farm, bearing always a pleasant, cheerful temperament, with fine conversational powers, he made Clover Fields very attractive, and sustained the traditionary hospitality of his forefathers in an eminent degree.

The Clover Fields farm has always been noted for its fertility and productiveness; its waving fields of clover, from which it derives its name; its bounteous crops of wheat and tobacco, the latter of which was mostly sent to England; its celebrated garden, which always bore the earliest vegetables in the neighborhood; its lofty cherry-trees, from which many an urchin fell in his eager grasp for the luscious fruit; its immense crop of apples; its droves of fat sheep and cattle, like those of the celebrated Robert Blakewell, of England, which



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were too dear for any one to purchase and too fat for any one to eat,—all these have rendered it famous, and won for it years ago the *sobriquet* of “Model Farm.”

One of the most interesting spots at Clover Fields is the family burying-lot, in one corner of the garden. Here on its many moss-covered tombstones can be read the names of most of the Meriwethers who have lived and died at this old place, dating back into the past century. Here sleep undisturbed on their native ground those noble men and women who lived in the exciting times of the Revolution and saw the wild country emerge into a “new nation,” and, with hearts glowing with love and patriotism, gently sank to rest, beloved by all around them. Here are also gathered families and connections, and even many strangers who have sickened and died within the walls of the old house, until the little cemetery is completely filled. It is now kept sacred, and forms a valuable guide-post to the historian in his search for the early characters in Virginia’s history.

Of late years Clover Fields has become a pleasant resort each summer for those who seek its cool mountain breezes, or love to roam over its picturesque hills and dales or secluded woodland retreats. Here one can tread the same spot where the wild Indian once made his tenting-ground, or can view the same landscape which broke upon the first settlers of Albemarle, and feel that he is indeed upon historic ground.





### CASTALIA

The Home of the Lewises. Now owned by Murray Boocock, Esq.



## CASTALIA

THE ESTATE OF MURRAY BOOCKOCK, ESQ.

**L**EWIS! How the name thrills the heart with patriotic emotions! What scenes of valor and deeds of daring does it recall as, like a brilliant picture, it speaks of the heroes of the past!

Next to that of Washington there is no name which stands forth more prominently upon the page of Virginia history than that of Lewis. Even from the first settlement of the infant colony we have General Robert Lewis, who landed on the shores of Virginia in 1600; then Colonel John Lewis, of His Majesty's Council; after whom came General Andrew Lewis, the bold frontier warrior, whose noble statue stands close to that of Washington at Richmond, Virginia; and then Robert Lewis, the intimate friend and secretary of Washington; and Colonel Fielding Lewis, who married the sister of Washington; and Meriwether Lewis, the explorer of the West; and many of the name who have graced our legislative halls even to the present day, all attest the fact that the name is the symbol for all that is noble, brave, and chivalrous.

Before entering upon Castalia, a short genea-

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logical sketch of the family may not be inappropriate.

General Robert Lewis, the first of the family, was the son of Sir Edward Lewis, of Beacon, Wales, and was said to be descended from the Duke of Dorset. This first Robert Lewis received a grant from the Crown for thirty-three thousand three hundred and thirty-three and one-third acres of land in Gloucester County, Virginia, where he first located and built his celebrated mansion, Warner Hall, descriptions of which sound more like the baronial castles of England than the primitive dwellings of the colonists. It is here that he lived in such regal style. All the furnishings of the house and even luxuries for the table were wafted up the York River from across the Atlantic, that he might keep up the princely living as of the landed gentry in the mother country.

John Lewis, the eldest son of Robert, was sent to England to be educated, and while there married Isabella Warner, a great heiress and sister of the famous Speaker Warner, of Virginia.

This son John (1st) had also a son named John (2d), who married Elizabeth, the youngest daughter of Speaker Warner. Their son John (3d) married Frances Fielding, and inherited Warner Hall, with all its silver plate, pictures, and jewels.

John (2d) and Elizabeth Warner had a son, Robert, who married Jane Meriwether, the daughter of Colonel Nicholas Meriwether, who obtained his large grant in Albemarle in 1730. This Rob-

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ert, who was a colonel in the Revolutionary war, after his marriage moved and settled at Belvoir, in Albemarle, being a part of his father-in-law's large estate. Colonel Robert Lewis had a son, Nicholas, who married Mary Walker, the daughter of Dr. Thomas Walker, of Castle Hill; they lived on a fine plantation near Charlottesville, Virginia, called The Farm, which we shall note hereafter. Their son, Thomas Walker Lewis, married Elizabeth Meriwether, sister of "Captain Billy" Meriwether, of Clover Fields. They lived at Locust Grove, which was a part of The Farm; it was here that their son, Robert W. Lewis, was born in 1808. This Robert (who was second cousin of Captain Robert Lewis, Washington's secretary) afterwards became the owner of Castalia, but only by purchase rather than by inheritance, to which he was entitled through his mother, who was the daughter of Colonel Nicholas Meriwether and Margaret Douglas, of Clover Fields.

The Castalia farm, lying between Clover Fields and Belvoir, containing about one thousand acres, was a part of the Meriwether grant gained by the first Nicholas Meriwether in 1730, during the reign of George II., the patent being signed by William Gooch, then governor of the colony. Warner Lewis, of Warner Hall, a nephew of Colonel Robert Lewis, of Belvoir, had already married the daughter-in-law of Governor Gooch, and doubtless was influential in gaining this large grant.

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To what limits this large body of land extended over the county is not known, though it must have embraced most of its entire area. Think of these two landed nabobs—Colonel Robert Lewis, with his thirty-three thousand three hundred and thirty-three and one-third acres, and Colonel Nicholas (2d) Meriwether, with nearly twenty thousand acres—owning almost two counties of Virginia!

The first to live at Castalia is said to have been an old negro named “Jack,” whose cabin stood near the present spring from which flows a bold stream through the plantation, which is still known as “Jack’s Branch.”

The first habitable building of any size was built in 1747 by “Colonel Nick” Meriwether before going to Clover Fields. This was only a double log cabin, perched near the old spring, and surrounded by a grove of oaks; it is still standing, showing a wonderful state of preservation. “Captain Billy” Meriwether, who inherited all of these lands, gave Castalia to his son, William Hunter, known as “Billy Fish,” who married Miss Poin-dexter. He lived in the old log cabin for some time, adding to it the framed part at the rear, and was the first to give it the classical name of Castalia, for the celebrated mythological fountain on Mount Parnassus, sacred to Apollo and the Muses, of which “Billy” imagined his spring at the foot of the mountain to be typical.

After the death of “Billy Fish,” his widow sold the farm to John H. Craven, of Pen Park, who gave it afterwards to his son William somewhere